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Reprinted Publication No. 3

PROCEEDINGS OF THE OTTAWA POPULATION
CONFERENCES (BOOK REVIEWS)

by

Karol J. Krótki

om Eugenics Quarterly, 12(3):168-172. September, 1965.

Reprinted November, 1974.

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TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF LAST FOUR MEETINGS AND REPORTS
OF IUSSP

No. of	Stock- holm 1957	Vienna 1959	New York 1961	Ottawa * 1963
Volumes	1 †	2	2	1½ (1)
Pages	339	872	1,376	643 (468)
Sessions	4	8	11	5 (2½)
Papers	31	77	128	45 (28)
Participants	?	200	321	? (104)

* Includes the report on sessions held jointly with the ISI and reported upon in their Bulletin. Data in respect of the volume under review are in parentheses.

† Appeared in *Bulletin de l'Institut International de Statistique* as Tome 36, 2^e Livraison.

raphers must have been taking a deeper breath in anticipation of the First Asian Population Conference, 1963, and the Second World Population Conference, 1965. The conference consisted of five sessions, of which two and a half are being reported upon in the volume under review; the others, forming part of the proceedings of the ISI, are included in the Bulletin of the ISI reviewed separately. The "half session" consisted of papers presented to a joint meeting with the ISI, but printed in the IUSSP volume because they were prepared by non-members of the ISI.

The two purely IUSSP sessions were devoted to "Vital Statistics from Limited Data" and to "Social and Economic Factors in Mortality and Morbidity." The programs of all the sessions, including the ISI sessions, disclose only mild awareness of the "population problem." Reflected in public anxiety, tinted by journalism, it did not penetrate into more academic pursuits. This could be the result of deliberate selection of the topics for the conference but could also be due to a paucity of ideas in this topical field.

There was a good reason for the session on vital statistics. The previous

INTERNATIONAL POPULATION CONFERENCE
—CONGRÈS INTERNATIONAL DE LA POPULATION, OTTAWA, 1963: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Liège, 1964. 468 pp.

The last four meetings of the IUSSP have been handsomely reported in Proceedings. They and the respective reports can be conveniently compared in Table 1.

It will be seen from the summary in Table 1 that the Ottawa conference and its report are more modest in scope than the two preceding conferences. Demog-

conference in New York had no session on evaluation of demographic data, so that one on methods, at least applicable to countries with inadequate data, seemed in order. One to evaluate data from countries with more developed statistical systems is still due. The session reflects strongly the demographic work developing in Asia and Africa. (The programs were not tailored to reflect the relatively recent upsurge in demographic research in the "popular" democracies, except for some notable contributions from Hungary.)

In spite of the thematic unity of the papers, the task of reviewing them would have been a troublesome one but for the excellent introductions by moderators. The moderator of the session on vital statistics (Muhsam) begins with a taxonomic exercise and suggests four groups of methods: using information relevant to the given population only, using rules or models, relying on empirical data observed in similar populations, methods involving both external data and rules or models. Methods of discovering and correcting errors in vital statistics are suggested as a fifth category of investigations.

While one could think up alternative groupings, the suggested arrangement is useful analytically. It isolates the various methods available in theory. In practice, in the detective-type of inquiries one has to undertake with uncertain data, nobody would limit himself for reasons of analytical purity to one investigation. The obvious approach is to pile up as many investigations as available data and relevant techniques permit and reconcile, if possible, the various divergent results. Through a process of successive iterations and refinements the differences can then be narrowed, or less convincing results can be discarded.

The ultimate confidence in such results is as much a function of the psychology of the inquirer as of the strength of the underlying method. Usually there seems to be one equation less than the number of unknowns, and temporary circularity in argument is the result. Provided not too great precision is claimed for the conclusions, reasonable approximations can be secured. Attempts at too great refinements may misfire. To look with confidence to changes in age groups at the bottom of the U-shaped age-specific mortality schedule as best indicators of past fertility (because little affected by mortality) sounds ingenious (p. 39) until one remembers that these are the ages with the largest underenumerations (concealment of females and labor mobility in the case of males). Blind reference to the stable population model can lead to dreadful (no exaggeration here!) errors. The use of age group 0-4 is still strongly advocated as the take-off point for investigations (Lorimer, p. 191); but it is sobering to see that several inquirers found age group 5-9 more reliable (e.g., Chandrasekaran, p. 109), though those whose business it was to estimate various parameters for the populations of Pakistan, Indonesia, and Senegal can only wish that this confidence in ages 5-9 (the single years do look sensible!) were more widespread and better founded.

All these investigations cannot really go much beyond the fact that an age pyramid is either flat (high fertility) or slim (low fertility). Furthermore, whatever the abuse heaped on the UN model life tables, they perform a useful service for most populations. Even on extreme assumptions using a wrong "family" of life tables (and one can seldom be certain which is the right "family") will make a difference of a small fraction of a *per cent* point in the birth rate—not a

bad order of magnitude of an error at which to operate. The operational usefulness of the Coale-Demeny "families," as distinct from their analytical delights, will no doubt be reported upon at future conferences.

The session on socioeconomic differentials in mortality and morbidity is a mine of findings from several sophisticated inquirers and gives notice of two important investigations, both large scale (hundreds of thousands of documents). Both inquiries attempt to match the dead with their socioeconomic characteristics while they were alive. The Chicago inquiry (Kitagawa and Hauser) proceeds from the numerator to the denominator. The INSEE inquiry in France (Calot and Febray) goes from the denominator to the numerator. Both depend on matching of individual documents from large heaps of documents. From Chicago a 20% failure rate has been reported. Another inquiry from France (Croze) reported 1%, but that was in the case of infant mortality, easier to match for a number of reasons.

A leveling in the mortality differentials has been reported from Hungary (Szabady), probably no greater than elsewhere, though the paper is also interesting methodologically. In any case the economic level seems to be less relevant than the cultural and social milieu (Croze). Similarly postneonatal differentials of a socioeconomic nature appear to be more significant than perinatal (Hansluwka). The various measures of morbidity show a high correlation with family income (Lawrence), but perhaps the occasional day off of the manager is recorded less pedantically than that of a clerk. Such variations by country and social class lend themselves to much ingenious speculation, the ultimate purpose of which is to uncover the under-

lying forces producing differences in mortality and morbidity.

The proofreading leaves something to be desired; referencing even more so. At least one important paper is mentioned (p. 184) as "contributed to the meeting." It is not in the report. It was not on the program.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 34TH SESSION,
OTTAWA, 1963:

Bulletin of the International Statistical Institute, Volume XL, Book 1, Toronto, 1964, pp. 319-494: Joint meetings with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.

One-third of this volume or one-sixth of the two volumes with the proceedings of the Ottawa session of the ISI is devoted to the three meetings on demographic topics held jointly with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. The IUSSP repeated its 1957 experience in Stockholm of holding its biennial conference along with the session of the ISI, except that this time only the joint meetings have been reported upon in the *Bulletin of the ISI*. Papers from the independent meetings have been gathered together in a separate volume published by the IUSSP. They are reviewed separately.

Two of the three joint meetings have been devoted to internal migration. The third one dealt with three papers on miscellaneous topics in the nineteenth century tradition of "free-for-all" conferences, though with less exciting results on this occasion. Winkler manages to blow some fresh air onto the ancient subject of standardization of death rates, since developed by him more fully in the

Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (Series A, 127 (4), 1964). Gini gives a useful summary of the investigations of the Italian Committee for the Study of Population Problems, begun in 1928, into small and primitive populations in the hope of discovering in these (disappearing?) groups echoes of past historical processes. Kamat inquires into the effect of improved mortality on the incidence of widowhood; however, on assumptions so strong that the outcome is almost tautological. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the topicality of the problem. The higher fertility in Pakistan has been traced by some writers—partly, and the longer duration at the far end of average fertile span of married women—entirely to the remarriage of widows, permitted in Pakistan, tabooed in India.

The two migration sessions gathered a rich harvest in 13 papers and 22 contributions to discussion. Several of them are original; several are useful additions to the fund of existing data. Hope Eldridge reports on a study of displacement by migration in the states of the U. S. A. and through a laborious analysis of age profiles suggests that the relatively low rates of displacement of those aged around 35 or 40 are the results of return migration and not necessarily of their lower mobility. She coins four phrases, so useful that they should find their way to the next UN demographic dictionary ("primary" and "reverse" migration; "fundamental" and "return"). But surely the displacement rates will not be the same when calculated on total gains and total losses (p. 322). Even if there is an algebraic identity between their absolute sizes, the age groups concerned (the average of the relevant age group at the beginning of the period and at the end of the period) will be in the

gaining states different from the losing states.

Ejnar Neymark reports on an exceedingly detailed survey of internal migrants in Sweden. It took ten years, Swedish perseverance and attention to detail, and Swedish type of data to be carried out. It throws an entirely new light on the selectivity of migrants, though too much must not be made of the fact that migrants lower the educational level of the villages they leave and the towns they arrive in. Surely, this is to be expected and has already been documented elsewhere. Zachariah uses an essay on historical migration within India to suggest a genuine contribution to the transition theory, though this reviewer doubts whether the U-shaped curve of redistribution (postulated—the evidence quoted is too uncertain), fed by natural increase on the left leg, canceled by migration at the low point, and fed by migration on the right leg, can be accepted as a description of general applicability. His conclusion that migration proves an inefficient agent of social change will be of interest to communication experts working in the field of family planning. His other conclusion that migration in India is "inefficient" in the Shryock sense could conceivably be part and parcel of the same underlying causes rooted in the Indian social scene.

In this age of closely argued hypotheses it is refreshing to enjoy the wide-sweeping generalizations—on uncertain evidence and yet sensible and convincing—of Brinley Thomas, associating swings in internal migration with capital formation. Macura adds one more contribution to the series of Yugoslavian endeavors in census and survey methodology (definition of "locality"). The report from Ghana makes fascinating reading for anybody interested in census-

taking and census results in underdeveloped countries, but the authors do not appreciate that age differentials in statistics of place-of-birth by place-of-residence are not necessarily and exclusively due to age differentials in migration propensity but could also be due to differences in the period of migration.

There is an interesting contribution to the formal theory of migration (Muh-sam), to the mechanics of assessing migration (Thirring), a probably misfired (because of built-in decreasing probabilities) attempt at a stochastic model of migration (McGinnis, Myers, and Pilger), a report on the Hungarian rural exodus (Mod), another one from Spain (Pos-Jimeno). There is also a particularly interesting formulation of the migrational attractiveness and unattractiveness of component parts of a country similar to Leontieff's input-output table (Pressat), though this reviewer failed to note the awareness of the insoluble contradiction between the need to relate the same migration stream to the base populations of the losing territory and the receiving territory, when the base populations are markedly different from each other.

The editorial blue pencil has not been used very effectively. There is awkwardness of style in some contributions, tables without titles, units of a table applying only to two out of five columns (p. 384), tables with percentages not making it clear which way the 100 is going, the difference between percentage and per cent points seldom indicated, a few misprints (e.g., "census survival and ratio method" on p. 387).

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